

GILDA Z. JACOBS Capitol Update



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**State Senator
Gilda Z. Jacobs**

How To Contact Me

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Dear Friends,

As my first year representing the 14th Senate District winds down, I wanted to take the opportunity to bring you up to date about what's been happening in Lansing. I've included some highlights from the recently passed budget for 2004, information about legislation I've been working on, and some helpful consumer information.

One area that is very important to me is consumer protection. Through the years I have worked to bring critical consumer protection issues to the forefront in the legislature, pushing for passage of bills to prevent consumer fraud, stop unwanted telemarketing and junk mail, and reform the insurance industry. I am currently co-chairing the Senate Democratic Caucus Task Force on Consumer Protection and we are looking specifically at insurance reform.

I will continue to focus on other consumer protection issues and want to hear your views on legislation to protect Michigan residents. Please contact me at the phone number or mailing or e-mail address listed on this newsletter to share your ideas with me.

As your state senator, it is important to me that I keep you informed of legislative action that affects you, as well as represent your interests on important issues. In addition to mailings like this newsletter, I also send out a regular e-mail bulletin called the Jacobs Report. The Jacobs Report provides you with timely news from the state capitol, as well as information specific to our District 14 communities. If you are interested in receiving the Jacobs Report, please send your e-mail address to sengjacobs@senate.michigan.gov so we can add you to our mailing list.

I will be spending time in the district in the coming months and look forward to meeting with local residents and community leaders. Your ideas, opinions, and concerns are very important to me so I hope you'll come out and share your thoughts.

Sincerely,

Gilda Z. Jacobs
State Senator

2004 Budget Eliminates \$1.7 Billion Deficit, Protects Taxpayers

Just a few short weeks ago we completed the budget for fiscal year 2004. The days of debate and discussion leading up to the final budget agreement were challenging as our state faced a \$1.7 billion deficit, one of the largest in our history. Declining tax revenues, overly optimistic revenue projections, and an excessive use of one-time revenues, in addition to a sagging

national economy, left us with a dreary picture for 2004.

The final budget agreement, worked out by the governor and legislative leadership, and passed by the House and Senate, is fiscally and socially responsible. State spending was reduced by approximately \$1 billion, while our children and our most vulnerable citizens were protected.

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The Dangers of Foodborne Illness

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) estimates that foodborne pathogens cause 76 million cases of illness, 325,000 hospitalizations, and 5,000 deaths in the United States each year. Michigan experienced 1,303 reports of foodborne illness last year, affecting over 3,000 people. However, this represents only a small fraction of total cases, since many people become ill without realizing that the cause is a foodborne pathogen.

America's food supply is the safest in the world; however, things we eat are sometimes vehicles for potentially life-threatening illnesses. The primary causes of foodborne illness are bacteria, viruses, and parasites. They can exist in a wide range of foods—including meat, milk and other dairy products, spices, chocolate, seafood, and even water. Especially prone are unpasteurized

fruit (and vegetable) juices and ciders; raw or undercooked eggs (or foods containing undercooked eggs); chicken, tuna, potato and macaroni salads; cream-filled pastries; and fresh produce. I am currently working on legislation that would require "consume by" dates on some of these items.

There are many common-sense precautions you can take in your own home to eliminate some of the causes of foodborne illness. Always wash your hands with hot, soapy water before handling food. Use a meat thermometer to insure that foods (especially meats) reach a safe temperature. Thoroughly clean work surfaces after every use. There are a number of very helpful websites and consumer information phone numbers that provide additional information about preventing, identifying, and reporting foodborne illnesses.

USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline

1-800-535-4555

FDA's Food Safety Information Hotline

1-888-SAFEFOOD
(1-888-723-3366)

Reporting Foodborne Illness in Michigan

<http://www.rusick2.msu.edu>

Partnership for Food Safety Education

<http://www.fightbac.org>

FDA Consumer: Preventing Foodborne Illness

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/fdunwelc.html>

MI Dept. of Agriculture Food Safety

<http://www.michigan.gov/mda>

Tenant and Landlord Rights and Responsibilities



According to the 2000 Census, there are over 100,000 renter-occupied housing units in

Oakland County. Whether you are a tenant or a landlord, you entered into a contract when you signed the lease. The lease agreement grants certain rights and protections, as well as outlines duties and responsibilities for each party. It is important that both landlords and tenants understand their rights and responsibilities in a rental relationship.

The State of Michigan produces a very helpful informational booklet entitled "Tenants and Landlords: A Practical Guide." The booklet is written in an easy-to-read format and has information about rental-housing law, recovering or keeping safety deposits, sample leases, terminating a lease, and much more. Copies of this booklet are available for free at <http://www.mileg.org/documents/publications/tenantlandlord.pdf>. If you do not have access to a computer to download the booklet, please contact my office at 1-888-YES-GILDA and we will be happy to send you a copy. Watch your local papers for information on upcoming Town Hall meetings regarding this issue.

Four Bills Signed Into Law by Governor Granholm

A three-bill package I sponsored clarifying language for cemetery care was signed into law by Governor Granholm in July. Senate Bills 37, 38, and 39 amend the Cemetery Regulation Act to more specifically define the uses of endowment care and perpetual care funds for cemetery upkeep and maintenance.

Clarification of the vague language in the existing law will protect the rights of citizens who have purchased burial plots and prevent the situations like the one recently encountered by an Oakland County widow. Last year, the woman was finalizing burial arrangements for her husband when the cemetery informed her that a large tree was growing on his plot so he could not be buried there. Even though they sold her family the plot for the purpose of burial, the cemetery would not remove the tree. Finally, after many complications, the woman was forced to pay \$2,000 of her own money to have the tree removed so her husband could be buried. The cemetery took no responsibility for the fact that the plot they had sold was no longer fit for a burial. This legislation will prevent this type of abuse from happening to anyone else in their time of great loss.



The Governor also signed Senate Bill 238, a bill to reform the small group insurance market. This bill is part of a bi-partisan package of bills intended to protect small employers and employees from unfair insurance practices. It is an important first step in the regulation of the small group insurance market.

Currently, Michigan is one of only three states not regulating this market. As a result, rates are increasing at 30 percent a year, leaving employers with difficult decisions about renewing employee coverage. Affordable health care is of great concern to Michigan families and business owners. This bill, along with Senate Bill 234, may be the catalyst to improving access to high quality, affordable health insurance in Michigan.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

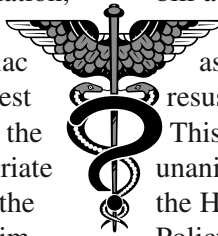
I have sponsored or co-sponsored over 100 bills so far during this legislative session. Here are highlights of some of that legislation.

Saving Lives at Health Clubs

Senate Bill 50 requires health clubs to have an automated external defibrillator and at least one employee certified in first aid and CPR on its premises during all hours of operation. It would also require the club to develop and implement an emergency plan addressing emergency services

during operational hours. According to the American Heart Association, about 250,000 Americans die each year of sudden cardiac arrest and 95% of cardiac arrest victims die before they reach the hospital. Only quick, appropriate response action can increase the chances of a heart attack victim

making it to the hospital alive. This bill addresses crucial steps in this “chain of survival” by assuring early access to care, resuscitation, and defibrillation. This bill passed the Senate unanimously and has been sent to the House Committee on Health Policy for further consideration.



Preventing Adoption by Convicted Sex Offenders

Senate Bill 516 will protect Michigan’s children by closing a loophole in the Michigan Adoption Code by preventing all convicted sex offenders from adopting kids. Under the current code, persons guilty of felonious criminal sexual conduct against a victim over the age of 18 are permitted to adopt children. This glaring loophole puts children in jeopardy and has, in at least one

specific situation in Oakland County, led to the molestation of innocent children who were knowingly put in the custody of a convicted sex offender. Sex offenders are a potential danger to children and should always be prevented from adopting a child. This bill received unanimous support in the Senate and has been sent to the House Committee on Family and Children Services.

Organ Donor Leave Act

Senate Bill 99 creates the “Organ Donor Leave Act,” to allow organ donor leave for state employees. This leave time would permit state employees to serve as organ donors without suffering a reduction in pay, credit for time of service, or performance rating. According to the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan, over 1,300 people in Michigan have died waiting for an organ transplant since 1996, including 32 in the first three months of this year. There are approximately 1,800 Michigan patients awaiting a kidney transplant, a procedure which can be performed using a living donor. According to the Foundation, potential living donors are dissuaded from providing organs because of the income loss they would experience during surgery and recovery. It is hoped that this new act will encourage potential donors to step forward and help those most in need. This bill was passed unanimously by the Senate and is awaiting review in the House Committee on Employment Relations, Training and Safety.

Patient Access to Contact Lens Prescriptions

Senate Bill 487 requires physicians (and optometrists) to release contact lens prescriptions to patients upon request, unless there is a compelling medical reason not to do so. One of the most frustrating experiences for contact lens wearers is trying to get a copy of their prescription from their doctor or optometrist, many of



whom are leery of losing the contact lens sale to a third party merchant. Prescriptions are the property of the patient, not the issuing party. With the multitude of options now available for purchasing contacts, consumers should not have to jump through hoops simply to get a copy of their prescription. This bill is currently in the Senate Committee on Health Policy.

Freedom to Work for Disabled People

I was proud to be a co-sponsor of an important bill Governor Granholm signed into law this summer which allows persons with disabilities to work and save for retirement without fear of losing their Medicaid coverage. The “Freedom to Work” law could benefit approximately 140,000 Michigan residents with disabilities

whose current income and assets exceed the eligibility threshold for Medicaid. The legislation establishes a program within the Department of Community Health to continue Medicaid coverage for people with disabilities. Under the program, a disabled person who is Medicaid-eligible could generate earned income in excess of existing

eligibility guidelines, and accumulate savings in retirement and individual retirement accounts without losing Medicaid benefits. Persons with disabilities will no longer have to choose between a productive working life and the benefits they need and deserve.



**State Senator
Gilda Z. Jacobs**

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Consumer Information – Clip and Save

The Heat and Warmth Fund (THAW) - assists residents who are behind in their heat, electricity, or water bills.

For general information, call 1-800-552-1183, or
In Southfield: 248-443-2230, ext. 309 or 248-827-0668
In Farmington Hills: 248-477-1153

MDOT Lane Closure Website - website to help avoid construction delays.

www.mdot.state.mi.us/laneclosure

Information about home owner's, renter's, and automobile insurance in Michigan.

<http://www.michigan.gov/cis>
Click on the link for the Office of Financial and Insurance Services.

Michigan Career Portal - this site is a bridge to state and national employment, career, education, and training resources.

<http://www.michigan.gov/careers>

Oakland County Resources Directory - links to information about eldercare, housing assistance, family support services, protective services, legal services, and much more.

http://www.co.oakland.mi.us/health/directory/dir_index.html

Oakland County Prescription Savings Program -

This program makes it possible for you to acquire your medications at a reduced rate.

<http://www.co.oakland.mi.us/npa/60.html>
Or call 1-866-731-7213

For information about additional prescription plans, please contact Senator Jacobs' office at 1-888-YES-GILDA

The National Do Not Call Registry - gives you an opportunity to limit the telemarketing calls you receive. Beginning October 1, 2003, most telemarketers will be required to remove the numbers on the registry from their call lists.

www.donotcall.gov or call 1-888-382-1222
For TTY, call 1-866-290-4236

Oakland County Friend of the Court - provides services to parties with minor children involving divorce, family support, interstate, and paternity cases.

Oakland Pointe Office Building
230 Elizabeth Lake Road
Pontiac, Michigan 48341
Phone: 248-858-0424
Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday
<http://www.co.oakland.mi.us/foc/>

2004 Budget Eliminates \$1.7 Billion Deficit *continued from page 1*

Following are highlights of the final fiscal 2004 budget:

- Per-pupil funding will be maintained at \$6,700, preserving critical funding for schools across the state.
- The Governor's recommended School Rainy Day Fund will receive \$75 million from federal emergency funds. This special savings account will only be used to fund education programs in the event of further economic hardship.
- Preschool and early childhood education programs will be maintained at \$72.8 million in funding.
- Health care programs for those who need it most will be realized as the increase in Family Independence Agency (FIA) and Medicaid caseloads will be funded for the coming year.
- Michigan's land, water, and air will be cleaner as a result of new revenues that will increase environmental protection.
- Seventeen road construction projects were approved, including the I-696/US-24/M-10 interchange in Southfield. This new interchange will greatly reduce traffic congestion in Southfield, Farmington, and Farmington Hills.